

Message Text

PAGE 01 ADDIS 07001 231023Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 7001

EXDIS

2ND C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT--SUMMARY--LINE 2, 7TH WORD TO
READ "BLOCKAGE" VICE "EMBARGO")

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, MOPS, ET, US
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA REPORTED CONSIDERING BREAK IN RELATIONS WITH U.S.
REFERENCE: STATE 304816; ADDIS ABABA CRITIC 12/22/77

DEPARTMENT DISTRIBUTE TO OTHER POSTS AS DESIRED

BEGIN SUMMARY-ETHIOPIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, OBVIOUSLY ON INSTRUCTIONS
OF DIRG, RAPPED ME FOR US "BLOCKAGE" ON ARMS TO ETHIOPIA WHILE CARRYI
NG
ON OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN OF DISTORTION OF ETHIOPIAN FACTS ON INTERNAL
AND EXTERNAL LIFE. DRAWING ON DEPT'S GUIDANCE AND DEPT SPOKESMAN'S
ASSURANCES OF ETHIOPIA'S SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO SEEK ASSISTANCE, I
EXPRESSED CONCERN OF FREIND OF ETHIOPIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN HORN
FOR SOVIET AND CUBAN INTERVENTION IN EXCESS OF DEFENSIVE NEEDS.
FOREIGN MINISTER APPEARED REASSURED BY ANSWERS, BUT WE STILL DO NOT
KNOW WHETHER HE CAN PROVIDE SUFFICIENT AMMO TO MODERATES IN DIRG
WHO ARE AGAINST BREAK IN RELATIONS WITH US.

1. FONMIN FELLEKE CALLED ME IN ON RELATIVELY SHORT NOTICE DECEMBER
22 TO DISCUSS WHAT EPMG SAW AS DETERIORATING BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH
US. HE SAID EPMG HAD EXPLAINED AT LENGTH TO THREE RECENT US DELE-
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GATIONS (POST/HENZE, STAFFDEL VAN VOORST, CODEL TSONGAS/BONKER)
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN COUNTRY. HE COULD NOT UNDER-
STAND WHY FACTS MUST ALWAYS BE TWISTED BY PARTICIPANTS OR BY OFFICIAL
PRESS RELEASES.

2. FOR EXAMPLE, REPORTS OF CUBAN BUILDUP (AVOIDED MENTIONING SOVIET)
WERE NOT HELPFUL. EPMG STATED POSITION MADE CLEAR THAT ETHIOPIA WAS
NOT COUNTING ON OTHERS TO DO ITS FIGHTING. AT SAME TIME, FELLEKE SAI
D,
EPMG HAD RIGHT AS INDEPENDENT (REPEATED FOR EMPHASIS) STATE TO HAVE

RELATIONSHIP IT DESIRED WITH ANY COUNTRY, INCLUDING SEEKING MILITARY ASSISTANCE. NEVERTHELESS, AT TIME WHEN SOMALIA ATTEMPTING TO TAKE MORE THEN ONE-THIRD OF ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY BY FORCE OF ARMS, US WAS CARRYING OUT VIRTUAL "BLOCKADE" OF ARMS DELIVERIES TO ETHIOPIA (WHOM US HAD FIRST ABANDONED) AND MAKING IRRESPONSIBLE REMARKS ABOUT THIS OR THAT BUILDUP. AMERICANS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT ETHIOPIA WAS ONLY FIRST STEP IN SOMALI PLAN, AS BORNE OUT BY LATEST EVENTS IN DJIBOUTI AND EARLIER IN SUMMER IN KENYA. ETHIOPIA WISHED TO STRENGTHEN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH US, ITS TRADITIONAL FRIEND. INTERNATIONAL WAR, CIVIL WAR, STRUGGLE AGAINST ANARCHISTS WERE ALL IMPOSED ON ETHIOPIA WHO HAD RIGHT TO FIGHT BACK.

3. PRESUMABLY RESPONDING TO CODEL TSONGAS'S COMPLAINTS ABOUT LIMITED US ACCESS TO EPMG LEADERSHIP, FELLEKE SAID CODEL HAD GOOD MEETING WITH PMAC CHAIRMAN, CHARGE TIENKEN HAD MET WITH HIM "MANY TIMES". ON QUESTION OF SECURITY IN COUNTRY, HE SAID ONE CAN TRAVEL TO ANY PROVINCE IN KAFFA (SIC) AND THAT ANARCHISTS LOCALIZED TO CAPITAL CITY. CONGRESSMEN HAD PLEASED CHAIRMAN BY REFERENCE TO "ANTI-IMPERIALIST" AMERICAN REVOLUTION, ONLY TO ENGAGE IN PROPAGANDA AFTER DEPARTURE. STATE DEPT STATEMENTS CONTRADICTED THOSE EPMG HEARS

FROM EMBASSY. DESPITE ETHIOPIAN GOOD WILL, AS EVIDENCED BY SENDING SENIOR MAN TO US AS AMBASSADOR, THERE HAD BEEN DETERIORATION OF CONFIDENTIAL

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RELATIONS. US HAS NOT RECIPROCATED AND APPARENTLY DOES NOT WANT RELATIONSHIP TO BE STRENGTHENED. (HE OF COURSE, AVOIDED OFFICIAL EPMG STATEMENT FOLLOWING VICE CHAIRMAN ATNAFU'S SUMMARY EXECUTION).

4. FELLEKE ENDED BY SAYING THAT AMBASSADOR AYALEW ADVISED MOND THAT "PERMISSION AT LAST GRANTED FOR FREIGHT FORWARDER ROHNER AND GEHRIG TO SHIP \$5 MILLION WORTH OF MILITARY GOODS EPMG HAD PAID FOR, BUT WHICH HAD BEEN HELD UP SINCE SUMMER." HE ASKED WHAT WAS REASON FOR DELAY.

5. I THANKED FONMIN FOR FRANK WORDS AND FOR MOFA ASSISTANCE TO CODEL AND STAFFDEL. WE HAD MADE CLEAR BEFORE VISIT, AND CODEL DURING VISIT, THAT CONGRESSMEN SPEAK ONLY FOR THEMSELVES AND CONSTITUENTS, NOT FOR US GOVT AS WHOLE, EXCEPT IN TRANSMITTING OFFICIAL MESSAGE TO PMAC CHAIRMAN.

6. I NOTED STATE DEPT SPOKESMAN STATEMENT THAT ETHIOPIA HAD SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO SEEK ASSISTANCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES. USG ALSO TOLD SIAD BARRE THAT HE SHOULD WITHDRAW IF THERE IS TO BE ANY HOPE FOR NEGOTIATED PEACE. US TOOK POSITION THAT BIG POWERS SHOULD NOT INTERVENE IN DISPUTES BETWEEN AFRICANS. THAT WAS WHY IT HAD STAYED OUT OF ANGOLA AND ZAIRE. IT WAS ALSO WHY IT HAD DECIDED NOT TO PROVIDE ARMS TO EITHER SOMALIA OR ETHIOPIA, INCLUDING THIRD COUNTRY TRANSFERS. WE HAD MADE SOLEMN DEMARCHES TO SAUDIS AND OTHERS FORBIDDING TRANSFERS OF US-SUPPLIED ARMS.

7. I CONTINUED THAT, GIVEN LONG US-ETHIOPIAN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP,

ETHIOPIANS WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT PRESSURES EXIST IN US FROM THOSE WHO WOULD SUPPORT SOMALIA BECAUSE OF APPREHENSION OVER SOVIET AND CUBAN INTERVENTION IN HORN. PRESIDENT CARTER HAD STALWARTLY RESISTED SUCH PRESSURES. AT SAME TIME US OPPOSES BIG ARMS BUILDUP IN EXCESS OF DEFENSIVE NEEDS IN HORN COUNTRIES AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. IT BELIEVED THAT WAR WOULD NOT HAVE STARTED IF SOMALIA HAD NOT RECEIVED SOVIET ARMS GROSSLY IN EXCESS OF NEEDS. WE HAVE CALLED ON SOMALIA TO REALIZE THAT IT COULD NOT SUCCEED MILITARILY AND THAT ONLY NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT HAD ANY CHANCE OF LASTING. US ALSO FIRMLY
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UPHELD PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. MERE ETHNICITY COULD NOT BE BASIS OF BORDERS IN AFRICA ANY MORE THAN ON OTHER CONTINENTS.

8. I TOLD FELLEKE US ADMINISTRATION ON VERGE OF SEEKING AGREEMENT FOR
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AMBASSADOR TO ETHIOPIA AND WAS RESISTING PRESSURES IN CERTAIN CIRCLES AGAINST AID PROGRAM. FINDING JUST THE RIGHT AMBASSADOR IS OFTEN A LONG POLITICAL/BUREAUCRATIC PROCESS IN US. ONE EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS IN AID FIELD WAS MY SIGNING DECEMBER 21 OF \$2 MILLION AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE TRUCKS FOR RELIEF PURPOSES. (FELLEKE NODDED AGREEMENT.) IT WAS UNFORTUNATE BUT TRUE THAT NOT ALL INDIVIDUALS HAD SAME COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, NOR WAS EVERY PUBLIC STATEMENT A RESPONSIBLE ONE. THERE ARE MANY UNTRUE STATEMENTS ABOUT US IN ETHIOPIAN PRESS (AGAIN HE SEEMED RECEPTIVE), BUT WE DO NOT TAKE THEM ALL SERIOUSLY. IN SHORT, I APPRECIATED FONMIN'S CRITICISMS, BUT DID NOT HOLD US GOVT RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF ACTIONS OF ALL INDIVIDUALS ABOUT WHICH HE WAS CONCERNED.

9. FELLEKE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD MY POSITION, THAT PLATFORM OF "TRADITIONAL" BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP REMAINED AND WOULD CONTINUE. EPMG ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THAT RELATIONSHIP. AT SAME TIME, IT WAS WORRYING FOR HIM TO HAVE REPORTED BACK SECRETARY VANCE'S ASSURANCES TO HIM POSITIVELY, ONLY TO WITNESS DISTORTIONS WHICH CAST THEM INTO DOUBT. IN ADDITION TO THOSE ALREADY MENTIONED, HE LAMENTED STORIES OUT OF NAIROBI FROM "OFFICIAL DIPLOMATIC SOURCES," THEN POINTING FINGER IN DIRECTION OUR EMBASSY. ETHIOPIA HAD NO DESIRE TO MEDDLE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES AND EXPECTED SAME BEHAVIOR FROM THEM AS WELL. EPMG HAD ALWAYS RESPECTED TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF DJIBOUTI, SOMALIA NEVER HAD. TOP GOVT FIGURES IN DJIBOUTI HAD RESIGNED BECAUSE OF SOMALI PRESSURE, ISSAS WERE TAKING DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS AGAINST AFARS.

10. ON US MILITARY ITEMS FOR ETHIOPIA, I ASSUMED FELLEKE WAS RE-
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FERRING TO REMAINING AIR FORCE AND VEHICLE SPARES AND HEAVY TRUCKS ON WHICH FULL TITLE HAD ALREADY PASSED LAST APRIL TO EPMG. LAST NEWS WE HAD ON THOSE ITEMS (STATE 263042) WAS CONVEYED TO MOFA NOVEMBER 4, AND IT WAS EMBASSY'S UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE WAS NO

QUESTION OF "PERMISSION" TO SHIP, BUT ONLY ONE OF LACK OF PAYMENT OF TRANSPORTATION COSTS. I OFFERED TO OBTAIN UPDATED STATUS REPORT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, AND LET MOFA KNOW. AS POINTED OUT DURING OUR FIRST MEETING AND BASED ON MY AF/C AND PM EXPERIENCE, SUCH DISCUSSIONS ARE USUALLY BEST CARRIED ON IN WASHINGTON WHERE DETAILS ARE MORE READILY AVAILABLE, NEVERTHELESS, I WOULD PERSONALLY DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO RESOLVE ANY OUTSTANDING ISSUES.

11. SUMMARIZING, I REPEATED THAT US RECOGNIZED ETHIOPIA'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF AND TO SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM WHOMEVER IT CHOOSES. BY SAME TOKEN, US HAD RIGHT TO EXPRESS CONCERN OVER FOREIGN ACTIONS THAT IN OUR VIEW DID NOT SERVE LONG TERM INTERESTS OF HORN COUNTRIES. JUST AS PERSONAL FRIENDS CAN HAVE HONEST DISAGREEMENTS OVER WHAT IS BEST, SO CAN COUNTRIES WITHOUT PUTTING FRIENDSHIP IN DOUBT. IT IS IN THIS LIGHT THAT WE ARE "CONCERNED" ABOUT CURRENT LARGE-SCALE SOVIET AND CUBAN BUILD-UP IN ETHIOPIA. THIS IS WHY WE BELIEVED THAT SOVIET ACTIONS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR SOMALI DECISION TO GO TO WAR IN FIRST PLACE. FELLEKE INTERJECTED THAT MORE FORTHCOMING US RESPONSE TO ETHIOPIAN ARMS REQUESTS COULD HAVE PREVENTED WAS AS WELL. SPEAKING ENTIRELY PERSONALLY AND AS NEWCOMER TO HORN, I BELIEVED US MILITARY THREAT ANALYSIS HAD PROBABLY COME TO CONCLUSION ETHIOPIA COULD DEFEND ITSELF. US, I DID NOT BELIEVE, INTENTIONALLY LEFT ETHIOPIA VULNERABLE. HOWEVER, I COULD APPRECIATE ETHIOPIAN ANALYSIS OF THREAT COULD BE DIFFERENT. I AGAIN THANKED MINISTER FOR FACILITATING ACCESS TO OTHER EPMG OFFICIALS DURING HIS ABSENCE IN FREETOWN, CONGRATULATED HIM ON SUCCESS OF ETHIO-SUDAN TALKS, AND REASSURED HIM I WOULD WORK MY HARDEST TO IMPROVE RELATIONS.

12. ALL IN ALL, MEETING WAS NO MORE DRAMATIC OR CONFRONTATIONAL THAN MANY OTHERS HERE DURING PAST YEAR. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT FELLEKE HAD BEEN CHARGED TO GET A MESSAGE ACROSS AND TO LISTEN TO WHAT I SAID IN RETURN, BUT HE DID SO IN SUCH A ROUNDABOUT WAY THAT ONE OFTEN HAD TO CONFIDENTIAL

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STRAIN TO DISCERN POINT HE WAS MAKING. FELLEKE REFERRED REPEATEDLY TO "OUR AMERICAN FRIENDS" AS IF HE WERE REACHING OUT FOR HELP TO SUSTAIN REMAINING MODERATES IN DIRG. BY SAME TOKEN, I FELT OUR IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE IS TO MAINTAIN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND, THEREFORE, CHOSE NOT TO SET RECORD STRAIGHT AT THAT MOMENT ABOUT CONGRESSMEN ACTUALLY SEEING ATROCITIES, SEIZURE OF US PROPERTY IN ASMARA, ETC. HE SEEMED TO TAKE SOLACE FROM MY NON-CONFRONTATIONAL TONE

13. BIG QUESTION WHICH REMAINS IS WHETHER FELLEKE SIMPLY GOING THROUGH MOTIONS ON MATTER WHERE DECISION MADE BEFOREHAND, OR WHETHER WHAT I SAID CAN REALLY TIP BALANCE ONE WAY OR OTHER. IF THE LATTER, DISCUSSION SHOULD HELP, AND I AM GRATEFUL FOR TIMELY DEPT RESPONSE. MEANWHILE, REQUEST FULL STATUS REPORT ON MILITARY ITEMS SHIPMENT QUESTION AND INDICATION OF ANY OTHER ACTIONS EMBASSY MIGHT TAKE AT THIS TIME TO CONVINCE EPMG THAT ITS INTEREST LIES, AS OURS DOES, IN KEEPING DOOR OPEN.
.ATHERON

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CORRECTED COPY FOR ADDITIONAL TEXT

13. BIG QUESTION WHICH REMAINS IS WHETHER FELLEKE SIMPLY GOING
THROUGH MOTIONS ON MATTER WHERE DECISION MADE BEFOREHAND, OR WHETHER
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Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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Disposition Reason:
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